

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 34-53 without disclaimer or prejudice to be pursued in this or a later-filed application and add the following new claims.

1-53. (cancelled)

54. (new) A method for authenticating data requests, comprising:

- receiving a request for data content from a computer system, said request being provided upon activation of a hyperlink at the computer system and including an encrypted confirmation code that comprises a provider identification code, a computer identification code, and computer identification data, the computer identification data including current information for identifying the computer system and expiring in accordance with a predetermined criteria;
- decrypting said encrypted confirmation code to form a decrypted confirmation code;
- extracting the computer identification code, the computer identification data, and the provider identification code each from the decrypted confirmation code;
- authenticating said request by comparing the computer identification code with the computer identification data;
- if said request comprises a valid data request, providing the provider identification code to a valid response database system and providing the data content to the computer system; and
- if said request comprises an invalid data request, identifying said request as being associated with a SPAM electronic mail message and providing the provider identification code to an invalid response database system,

wherein the hyperlink incorporates said encrypted confirmation code and is included in an electronic mail message transmitted to the user computer system by a content provider system associated with the provider identification code, the computer identification code uniquely identifying the computer system and being dynamically generated upon transmission of the electronic mail message.

55. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said receiving said request for the data content includes receiving said request for the data content at a merchant system.

56. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said receiving said request for the data content includes said encrypted confirmation code being encrypted in accordance with an encryption standard selected from the group consisting of a Data Encryption Standard (DES), an Enhanced Data Encryption Standard (EDES), and an One-Way Hash Function (MD5) standard.

57. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said receiving said request for the data content includes receiving said data request including said encrypted confirmation code with the current computer information selected from the group consisting of at least one of an internet protocol address, a time stamp, a date stamp, and a cookie.

58. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said providing the data content to the computer system comprises providing the data content to the computer system to generate interest in the data content.

59. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said receiving said request for the data content includes said encrypted confirmation code expiring after a predetermined time interval has elapsed.

60. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said comparing the computer identification code with the computer identification data includes determining whether the computer identification data has expired.

61. (new) The method of claim 54, wherein said providing the data content to the computer system includes providing advertisement content to the computer system.

62. (new) The method of claim 54, further comprising providing the provider identification code to an accounting management system if said request comprises the valid data request.

63. (new) The method of claim 62, wherein said providing the provider identification code to said accounting management system includes tracing an amount of remuneration owed to the content provider system.

64. (new) The method of claim 54, further comprising denying remuneration to the content provider system if said request comprises the invalid data request.

65. (new) A system for authenticating data requests, comprising:

a merchant system that receives a request for data content from a computer system, said request being provided upon activation of a hyperlink at the computer system and including an encrypted confirmation code that comprises a provider identification code, a computer identification code, and computer identification data, the computer identification data including current information for identifying the computer system and expiring in accordance with a predetermined criteria;

said merchant system decrypting said encrypted confirmation code to form a decrypted confirmation code and extracting the computer identification code, the computer identification data, and the provider identification code each from the decrypted confirmation code, said merchant system authenticating said request by comparing the computer identification code with the computer identification data;

a valid response database system, said merchant system providing the provider identification code to said valid response database system and providing the data content to the computer system each if said request comprises a valid data request; and

an invalid response database system, said merchant system identifying said request as being associated with a SPAM electronic mail message and providing the provider identification code to said invalid response database system each if said request comprises an invalid data request,

wherein the hyperlink incorporates said encrypted confirmation code and is included in an electronic mail message transmitted to the user computer system by a content provider system associated with the provider identification code, the computer identification code uniquely identifying the computer system and being dynamically generated upon transmission of the electronic mail message.

66. (new) The system of claim 65, wherein said merchant system, said valid response database system, and said invalid response database system are at least partially integrated.

67. (new) The system of claim 65, further comprising a communication system for supporting communication among said merchant system, said valid response database system, and said invalid response database system.

68. (new) The system of claim 67, wherein said communication system supports communication with the computer system and the content provider system.

69. (new) The system of claim 67, wherein said communication system comprises a communication link selected from the group consisting of a local area network, a wide area network, a public communication network, and the Internet.

70. (new) The system of claim 67, wherein said communication system includes at least one wireless communication link.

71. (new) The system of claim 65, wherein the data content comprises advertising content related to a business associated with the merchant system.

72. (new) The system of claim 65, further comprising an accounting management system, said merchant system providing the provider identification code to said accounting management system if said request comprises the valid data request.

73. (new) The system of claim 73, wherein said accounting management system traces an amount of remuneration owed to the content provider system.